

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Academy for Educational Development

“Let Kids Lead” Youth Initiative to Reduce VMT

Initiative Goal

To produce a blueprint for innovative, community-based program that involves American youth and their families in reducing travel-related emissions, in order to support states and local communities seeking to meet air quality standards and improve public health.

Cooperative Agreement with Academy for Educational Development (AED)

- AED is a private, nonprofit service organization with 35 years of experience in addressing the problems of human development, with a strong emphasis on youth..
- AED approached EPA with a proposal to work together on this effort.

Youth Involvement

- Research shows that involving youth can improve project effectiveness and sustainability. Youth can play a role in several ways:
 - Communicate about travel choices.
 - Contribute to finding travel solutions.
 - Choose travel options that minimize VMT.

Initiative Design

- The three-year initiative, begun Spring 1997, provides a basis for a youth-oriented program design.
- Work in each pilot site (Tampa, Boston, Kansas City) is happening with the participation of health, environmental, or transportation oriented groups and youth-focused organizations.

Outcome

- Students in Liberty, Missouri (a suburb of Kansas City) conducted surveys and successfully presented the results to the city Planning Commission. As a result the city is pursuing more sidewalks for walking and biking. In addition, a high school student has joined the long term planning committee.
- In Roxbury, Massachusetts, as part of the Boston pilot site, youth successfully rallied to enforce a state idling law for buses by issuing their own “tickets” to diesel buses idling more than 5 minutes. As a result the transit agency has reduced idling and committed to transition to an alternative fuel bus fleet in time.
- In Tampa, Florida, youth participants created YEA (Youth Environmental Associates.) Students in YEA clubs have produced radio spots played on local radio stations, created their own website promoting the benefits of carpooling and been featured on local TV news for their efforts.

Products

- 1) Let Kids Lead Website 1999: < <http://www.letkidslead.org>> to be completed November, 1999. The documents below will be available on the website:
- 2) Let Kids Lead Guide for Community Action, 1999 which includes:
 - a) Summary of activities at 3 pilot site locations
 - b) Ideas to consider when starting a program
 - c) Tools to assist in implementing a program such as exercises to compare doer/non-doer behavior, and sample survey
 - d) 12 minute audio CD of the participants sharing their experiences. This audio segment may be heard over the internet.
- 3) Let Kids Lead Booklet, 1998 which provides a summary of the annotated bibliography.
- 4) Let Kids Lead: Annotated Bibliography of Recent Research, 1997.